

HEY, LITTLE SISTER

B&W's top technology is now also benefiting the entry-level 600 line, making the 606 a real star!



Everything new at B&W. The groundbreaking Continuum membrane material gives reason to now also update the popular 600 series. Its predecessor, the 685 S2, was a damn good loudspeaker – and of course it still is! However, the B&W engineers apparently find it difficult to withhold their obviously superior technologies once they exist. Especially since the transfer of innovations to affordable regions, by means of the quantity of diaphragms and drivers, will pay off the development costs more quickly. Further, synergies can be created through the **component-shelf policy**, not to mention the substantial advantages in marketing and competition.

Only 700 Euro per pair are to be paid for B&W’s legitimate successor of the 685 S2. The 606, which is the larger one of two compact speaker models and is equipped with a 165 woofer, is even exactly the same size as its predecessor.

For the smaller version, which is called 607 and is equipped with a 130 bass/midrange driver 530 Euros are due for the pair. They are a reasonable choice, if a

smaller room is to be covered and one can do without some of the authority and a few Hertz of low end response. The bass reflex port of the 606 forms a unit with the bi-wiring terminal and was moved to the rear of the speaker, as opposed to its predecessor. So far the obvious...

The use of a surround-less midrange driver is out of the question in a compact speaker, as the low-frequency range has to do hard work, which is why a walking surrounding is indispensable. The new Continuum cone in surround-less design is therefore only available in floorstanding speakers with at least three drivers, i.e. the floorstanding speaker 603, which works with four drivers. Nevertheless, the

new diaphragm material, which B&W is known to have researched to perfection for around eight years and initially made available in the 800 and 700 series, has an enormous effect. Okay, you might not recognize the B&W from a distance anymore, because the distinctive yellow of the Kevlar web structure gave way to a rather discreet silver, but the “Continuum” sounds more open, more neutral,

KEYWORD

component-shelf policy:

If a manufacturer uses the same parts or assemblies for different products, the higher number of units results in advantages for production and economics.



▲ The new membrane material “Continuum” is woven and shimmers silver – and it sounds neutral, without its own signature, considerably better than Kevlar.

indeed, it practically doesn’t change the tone-color at all. We were able to convince ourselves of this in the 800 series and then also in the 700 series. Since their birth, the 800 and 802 D3 have been amongst the most regularly used tools of our editorial staff for tests – if not for anything else, as benchmark.

The double-layer aluminum dome tweeter, which was already used in the S2, was now equipped with a neodymium drive, a different grille and was moved slightly forward. Also the individual



◀ Even the decoupled double-layer aluminum dome tweeter now uses technology from the 700 series. It has now got a neodymium drive and underwent a timing adjustment.

components of the crossover have been upgraded – the 700 series sends its greetings. The cabinet, which is available in matt black or matt white, is practically the same as on the 685 S2 with the exception of the reflex opening, B&W, however, gave the 606 a more elegant, magnetic fastening of the cover. To summarize: progress where ever you look, even for the eyes.



▲ Even the 600 series allows bi-wiring, the bass reflex terminal is flow-optimized like a golf ball.

The musical performance of the currently second smallest B&W is of a clarity and self-evident authority, as well as of a plasticity that could very well be called “surprising” in view of the price. A “must-listen” – even for those who may not have been convinced by the older B&W models.

As I said before, I already found the 685 and the improved 685 S2, both well known to me from tests and the living room of a good friend, to have been great. The 606, however, puts the icing on the cake and outclasses both in terms of naturalness. Especially in the ranges where most of the music takes place – in the high-mid range. But the 606 also appears a bit faster, as well as more immediate and dynamic in the bass, thus continuing to mark the top of the 800 Euro class.

It conveys both three-dimensionality and atmosphere of the band, which recorded “Come Away With Me” together with Norah Jones, convincingly, staggers credibly into the depths and knows, despite all the tonal accuracy and musical flow, how to devote itself to details and to depicting even surprising impulse peaks unerringly. Thanks to the good tuning, the bass reproduction reaches down to below 50 Hertz and delivers a well-balanced foundation between crisp and deep black.

The performance of the 606 is the sum of some large and countless small improvements in detail. One would like to write: “the result of experience and competence”. And it is worth every cent, not least because of its similarity to the higher-ranking model series. We believe that it could even hold its ground beyond its price range. Recommended!

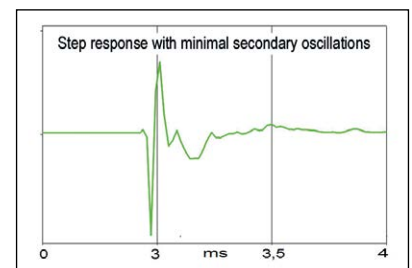
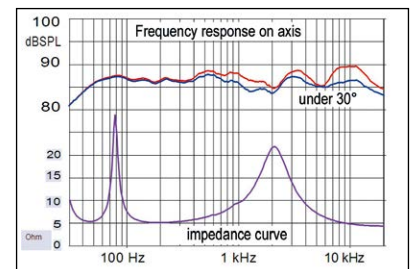
Tom Frantzen

B&W 606

Price: around 700 €
 Dimensions: 19 x35 x30 cm (WxHxD)
 Warranty: 10 years
 Contact: Bowers & Wilkins
 www.bowerswilkins.com

Technology transfer makes it possible for the Continuum membrane material to be included in B&W’s entry-level series. Although the 685 S2 was already very good, it is clearly outclassed by its younger sister, the 606. An audiophile killer in this class!

MEASUREMENT RESULTS



DC resistor	4 Ohm
Minimum impedance 5 Ohm at	200 Hz
Maximum impedance 28 Ohm at	77 Hz
Sound pressure characteristic (2.83 V/m)	86.1 dB SPL
Power for 94 dB SPL	10.6 W
Lower cut-off frequency (-3dB SPL)	46 Hz
Distortion factor at 63/3k/10k Hz	0.3/0.1/0.1 %

LAB COMMENTS

Quite balanced response down to below 50 Hertz, especially with straight positioning to the listening position. At around 86 dB, the efficiency is approximately average, and the distortion behavior is exemplary. The impedance never falls below four ohms, the step response shows very good timing.

STEREO-TEST

SOUND QUALITY **83%**

PRICE/PERFORMANCE

★ ★ ★ ★ ★
OUTSTANDING